**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 22, line 3, with the following amended paragraph:

The guide rod 670 is a tubular member and includes at least one slot 682 formed therein for releasably holding the loop actuation wire 654. As shown in Figure 27, the guide rod has a main tubular body dimensioned to fit inside the guide sheath and has a tapered end 800 having an opening ~~802~~ at the tip to accept the central guide wire. To releasably hold the actuation wire, at least one longitudinal slot (or slit) 682 may be formed in the guide rod 670 along its length. To permit temporary holding and controlled release of the loop actuation wire 654, the width of the longitudinal slot (or slit) 682 at the surface of the guide rod 670 may be less than the outside diameter of the stabilization guides 660 or the loop actuation wire 654, so that the stabilization guide and/or loop actuation wire 654 is held within the slot (as shown in Figure 27) until released by the sliding action of the sheath over the guide rod, as described below. The loop actuation wire and/or wire guides can be held in a slot or slit formed in the guide rod (which may define a separate lumen structure in the guide rod), or alternatively the slot can be formed with a diameter less than the width of the wire or wire stabilization guide to permit the wire or wire stabilization guide to friction fit into the slot. As shown in Figures 27-29, the slot 682 may be bounded by a pair of recessed areas 658, 659, so that, for example, the wire guides do not catch on tissue as the guide rod is inserted and removed from an artery or vein. Alternatively, instead of defined slots formed in the guide rod, slits (not shown) may be formed in the material of the rod such that the

loop actuation wire 654 is releasably held to the guide rod in a friction fit manner, and released from the guide rod in a similar manner as described above.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 23, line 18, with the following amended paragraph:

While not necessary to provide operability to the present invention, an opening ~~804~~ within the guide rod may be provided to expose a portion of the central guide wire 502. The central guide wire 502 can then be placed over the loop portion 680 of the loop actuation wire 654 to secure the loop to the guide rod until the central guide wire is removed.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 24, line 6, with the following amended paragraph:

Figures 39 and 39A depict cross-sectional views of the guide rod 670 of this exemplary embodiment. The guide rod 670, as depicted in ~~Figure 40~~ Figures 39 and 39A, includes a plurality of lumens: 802, 804, 806 and 808. Lumens 808 and 806 are included as a blood marking passageway (described herein) and a wire guide passageway, respectively. Lumens 806 and 808 are shown adjacent one another, but these lumens could also be formed coaxial with on another (e.g., the wire guide lumen inside of the blood marking lumen). Lumens 802 and 804

releasably hold the loop actuation wire therein, and run along the length of the guide rod~~, for example, as shown in Fig. 27~~. Lumens 802 and 804 are shown on opposing sides of the guide rod. But it is equally contemplated that the lumens need not be disposed at opposition, but rather may be formed at any angle with respect to one another. A slit 810 may be provided such that the loop actuation wire is held in lumen 802/804 until outward pressure forces the wire to "pop" out of the slit 810. To that end, the material surrounding the slit may comprise material of reduced durometer (with respect to the rest of the guide rod) such that the actuation wire can slide into and out of the lumen. Alternatively, instead of a slit, a slot may be formed as depicted in Figure 39A. The slot 812 is defined by truncated lobes 814 and 816. Lobes 814 and 816 may also comprise material of reduced durometer with respect to the remaining portions of the guide rod. Slot 812 can be dimensioned for a particular gage wire inserted therein. Although lumens 804 and 802 are depicted as having generally circular cross-sectional shapes, the present invention equally contemplates other shapes, as may be dictated by the cross-sectional shape of the loop actuation wire (although the cross sectional shape of the wire stabilization guide, loop actuation wire and the lumen need not match).

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 30, line 1, with the following amended paragraph:

The tissue retention device 820 is generally provided herein to secure the distal end of the sheath to the tissue, e.g., to the arterial wall about the wound site. Deployment of the retention

device is depicted in Figures 41-45. As in the previous embodiments, the wire stabilization guides 660A and 660B are deployed by moving the guide rod 670 with respect to the sheath 662. The retention device 820 is formed along the length of the wire stabilization guide at a predetermined distance from the end of the sheath. One utility of the retention device 820 is to ensure the sheath 662 remains located on the wound site, so a predetermined distance of the retention device from the end of the sheath may be chosen, for example, in accordance with the thickness of the tissue in which the device is deployed. Figure 43 depicts the sheath, stabilization guides and retention devices in a deployed position. In this exemplary embodiment, the retention devices 820 formed on each stabilization guide secure[[s]] the sheath to the arterial wall to prevent transverse movement of the sheath with respect to the wound site.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 30, line 14, with the following amended paragraph:

The retention device 820 of this embodiment is essentially an expanding portion of the wire stabilization guide. To that end, Figures 42, 43 and 44A depict the retention device deployed into the expanded position. The retention device 820 is formed by a split 822 on each side of the stabilization guide 660. The ~~loop~~ actuation wire is affixed to the wire stabilization guide, for example, at point 824. To deploy the retention device, the ends (656 and/or 657) of the wire are pulled proximally, thus causing the distal end of the wire stabilization guide to be drawn proximally, and causing the retention device to compress and buckle at the split sections

(by placing a ~~tensile~~ compression load on the stabilization guide). To release the retention device, the wire is moved distally, thereby releasing ~~tension~~ compression on the stabilization guide, as shown in Figure 45.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 31, line 1, with the following amended paragraph:

Returning again to Figure 44A and 44C, compression on the stabilization guide to form the retention device may also be used to expand the distal tip of the sheath at the slits or weakened tear seams 686, as shown in the relaxed position (Figure 44B) and expanded position (Figures ~~43A and C~~ Figures 44A and 44C). Optionally, the stabilization guides 660A and/or 660B may be of a more rigid nature and preformed in the configuration shown in Figure 44 B. Drawing the stabilization guides 660A and/or 660B in a proximal direction would cause an expansion of the distal tip of the sheath (Figure 44 C).

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 31, line 15, with the following amended paragraph:

Figures 49-57 depict numerous exemplary embodiments of the retention device of the present invention. The retention device 820 in each of the figures is depicted in partial cut-away

view, showing the stabilization guide 660 and wire 654. Figure 49A and 49B depict detailed views of the retention device 820 of the previous embodiment in the relaxed (static) and deployed positions, respectively. In Figure ~~50~~ 50A, the retention device 820' comprises a tubular member with a hollowed out notch portion (or skive) 824 formed along the length thereof. Compression of the tubular member causes the material opposite the notch to collapse thereby forming the retention device (Figure 50B). In Figure ~~51~~ 51A, the retention device 820'' comprises a tubular member with a plurality of filaments 826 that fold (upon compression) to form the retention device. In this case, a small loop is formed. Alternatively, a buckle (not shown) is formed having a U-shape that does not form a complete loop. In Figure 52, retention device 820''' comprises a tubular member with generally symmetrical notches (or skive) on either side, 840 and 842, with slots emanating from the notches ~~which overlap~~ and overlapping approximately midway between the notches. The slots overlap forming a through-hole approximately equal to the inside diameter of the tube. The cross section of the tube in the area of the slot is that of a U-shaped beam. Compression causes the tubular member to fold at the notched sections 840 and 842, fulcruming on the wire at the location where the slots overlap, as shown in Figures 52B and 52C.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 32, line 11, with the following amended paragraph:

Figure ~~53~~ 53A depicts yet another exemplary embodiment of a retention device 900 that is similar to the example shown in Figure 51, except the retention device 900 comprises a single strand member 902 between a stationary member 904 and a moveable member 906. The moveable member 906 is moved over the wire guide 660 towards the stationary member 904 buckling the strand 902, as shown in Figure 53B. Similarly, in Figure ~~55~~ 55A and B the moveable member 906 is brought closer to the stationary member 904 to form a loop from the strand 902. In the retention device 900' of Figure ~~54~~ 54A, the strand 902' is disposed off-line (i.e., off axis) between the stationary member 904 and the moveable member 906 ~~(Figure 54A)~~. Movement of the moveable member 906 forms a loop as shown in Figure 54B (the loop in Figure 54B is somewhat distorted as compared to the loop of Figure 55B). Figures 56A and 56B depict another exemplary retention device that utilizes a resiliently deformable member 908 that is compressed along the axis of the wire thus causing expansion of the member 908 in the plane substantially normal to the wire. Figure 56B depicts expansion in all directions in the plane normal to the wire, however, the expansion in all directions is not necessary. Figures 57A and 57B depict an expanding mesh retention device 910. In this embodiment, mesh is formed by a plurality of individual strands which expand outwardly upon compression (as indicated by the arrows).

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 33, line 6, with the following amended paragraph:

In the embodiments of Figures 40-57, the retention device of the present invention may be viewed as an extension or lobe formed on one or both stabilization guides, or, in the case of the loop structure of Figures 46-48, the retention device may be formed on opposing sides of the loop, as shown. The retention device examples of Figures 49-57 are intended to apply to both the embodiments of Figures 40-45 and/or 46-48. The orientation of the retention device with respect to the wire stabilization guide or loop is depicted as generally perpendicular thereto, but the retention device may be formed from greater than 0 degrees to less than 180 degrees from wire stabilization guide or loop and still work as intended. The present invention covers all such alternatives. The orientation of the retention device with respect to the wound opening is depicted, for example in Figure[[s]] 43~~, 45 and 47~~, as being generally perpendicular to the long axis of the wound. However, this angle is not a requirement of the present invention, but rather the retention device can be disposed at any angle with respect to the long axis of the wound.